

Message Text

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ACTION AID-31

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6206

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL ANTWERP

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF, BE

SUBJECT: RAV TOV APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION WITH AID'S ADVISORY

COMMITTEE ON VOLUNTARY FOREIGN AID

REF: STATE 45288

1. WE INTERVIEWED MESSRS S. STAUBER AND MICHEL WIEDER, RAV TOV PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR EUROPE RESPECTIVELY ON FEB 27. IN VIEW OF THEIR POSITIONS IN RAV TOV'S EUROPEAN WORK AND THEIR AVAILABILITY HERE, WE POSED QUESTIONS ON THEIR ORGANIZATION IN AUSTRIA, ISRAEL, ITALY AND THE UK AS WELL AS IN BELGIUM. EMBASSIES LONDON, ROME, VIENNA AND TEL AVIV MAY FIND THAT INFORMATION GIVEN BELOW USEFUL TO PURSUE THEIR INQUIRIES.

2. NATURE OF ORGANIZATION. RAV TOV IS AN ORTHODOX JEWISH, NON-ZIONIST IMMIGRATION ORGANIZATION INTERESTED IN RESETTLING SOVIET JEWS, PARTICULARLY RETURNEES FROM ISRAEL. WHILE RELIGIOUSLY MOTIVATED, ITS FOCUS IS ENTIRELY HUMANITARIAN AND DIRECTED TOWARDS ANY JEWISH PERSONS REGARDLESS OF THEIR JUDAISM OR LACK THEREOF.

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IT HELD A "WORLD-WIDE CONFERENCE" OF ORTHODOX AND

CHASSIDIC JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN LONDON, JULY 11-14, 1975 ATTENDED BY 2,000 DELEGATES. THE THRUST OF THAT MEETING WAS TO BRING PRESSURE ON THE USSR TO EXTEND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM TO ALL SOVIET JEWS AND TO PERMIT FREE EMIGRATION OF THOSE JEWS WHO WANTED TO LEAVE THE USSR. IN ADDITION THE RAV TOV CONFERENCE PROTESTED THE POLICY OF THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT, WHICH IT SAID WAS TO OSTRACIZE ANY JEW WANTING TO LEAVE ISRAEL AND TO ENSURE THAT SUCH PERSONS RECEIVED NO HELP FROM JEWISH VOLAGS.

3. ORGANIZATION. RAV TOV'S MAIN EUROPEAN OFFICE IS LOCATED AT KORTE HERENTALSESTR 2, 2000 ANTWERP. IT HAS ONE PERMANENT EMPLOYEE, A SECRETARY (TEL. 031/316-314). MR. STAUBER IS A BELGIAN IMPORTER/EXPORTER OF CULTURED PEARLS AND IS THE BROTHER OF AMCIT RABBI CHAIM M. STAUBER, ONE OF THE VICE CHAIRMEN OF RAV TOV IN NEW YORK. MR. WIEDER IS BELGIAN, BORN IN TRANSYLVANIA, WHO TRAVELS REGULARLY BETWEEN RAV TOV OFFICES IN EUROPE. RAV TOV EUROPE HAS AN EXECUTIVE BOARD COMPOSED OF NINE RESIDENTS OF ANTWERP (6 BELGIANS, 2 AMCITS AND 1 AUSTRIAN). IT RECEIVED OFFICIAL BELGIAN RECOGNITION AS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION ON OCTOBER 16, 1975. RAV TOV HAS BRANCH OFFICES IN THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS: (A) AUSTRIA. 20/3/2 PRATER STASSE, VIENNA 1020. (TEL. 24-21-30). MR. WIEDER IS IN CHARGE OF THAT OFFICE, WHICH IN HIS ABSENCE IS RUN BY MRS. KONICEK. (B) ITALY, HOTEL LIDO OSTIA, ROME. (TEL: 660.18.92). MR. WIEDER RUNS THAT OFFICE ALSO. IN HIS ABSENCE, MR. BRAUN IS IN CHARGE. (C) UNITED KINGDOM TWO OFFICES: 130 CAZENOUE ROAD, LONDON, N16 6AH (TEL. 01-806 6945). MESSRS BERGER AND ARRAN; AND 66 WATERPARK ROAD, SALFORD 7, MANCHESTER (TEL. 061-740-3670). MR. WEISS IS IN CHARGE. (THOS OFFICE IS NOT YET IN FULL OPERATION.) (D) ISRAEL. RAV TOV BRANCH IN ISRAEL IS KNOWN UNDER THE NAME OF PEILIM, JONA STR. 4, JERUSALEM. RABBI LIPSCHITZ IS IN CHARGE.

4. ACTIVITIES. RAV TOV TRIES TO ASSIST EX-SOVIET JEWS IN ANY WAY IT CAN WITHIN ITS MEANS. ITS ASSISTANCE IS UNCLASSIFIED

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EXTENDED ON A CASE BY CASE BASIS AND VOERS THE FULL RANGE OF CLOTHING, FOOD, DAY CARE AND EDUCATION, ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION, HOUSING, MEDICAL CARE AND RELIGIOUS COMFORT. IT FOCUSES ON THOSE WHO HAVE LEFT ISRAEL AND DO NOT BENEFIT FROM OTHER ASSISTANCE FROM WHATEVER SOURCE MIGHT BE AVAILABLE. RAV TOV BELIEVES THERE ARE NOW APPROXIMATELY 4,000 JEWS IN WESTERN EUROPE IN THIS CATEGORY

AND CLAIMS TO HAVE HAD SOME FORM OF CONTACT AT SOME TIME WITH 3,000 OF THESE. IT HAS EXTENDED ITS AID TO SOME WHO HAVE BEEN REFUSED ENTRY TO THE U.S. UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE USRP. RAV TOV HOPES THAT APPROXIMATELY 1,000 OF THE 4,000 WILL BE RESETTLED IN EUROPE, WITH THE REST GOING LARGELY TO THE US, CANADA AND AUSTRALIA.

5. FINANCES. THE EUROPEAN OFFICE OF RAV TOV RECEIVES A MONTHLY SUBSIDY OF \$4,500 FROM ITS US PARENT ORGANIZATION. IT HAS TRIED TO RAISE FUNDS IN EUROPE, BUT HAS ENCOUNTERED DIFFICULTIES IN DOING SO BECAUSE OF ITS NON-ZIONIST STANCE. ITS BASE OF POPULAR SUPPORT FOR FUND-RAISING IS SMALL AND RESPONSE TO APPEALS HAVE DROPPED OFF BY 10-15 PERCENT EACH TIME. THEIR EFFORTS TO RAISE FUNDS IN EUROPE ARE DIMINISHING. WITHOUT SUPPORT FROM THE US IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO CONTINUE ACTIVITIES IN EUROPE. EXPENSES HAVE FLUCTUATED WIDELY, DEPENDING LARGELY ON FUNDS AVAILABLE, BUT ARE SAID TO HAVE RUN ABOUT \$20,000 PER MONTH. RENNER

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